

REMARKS

This paper is responsive to the Office Action mailed March 21, 2007. Claims 1, 2, 4-8, 10, 14 and 15 are pending in the subject application. Claims 1, 2, 4-7 and 14 have been amended. Support for all amended claims can be found in the specification, and no new matter has been added by these amendments. Reconsideration of the claims in view of the amendments and the following remarks is respectfully requested.

Claim Objections

The Office Action objected to the amendments to claims 1, 4, 7 and 14 for introducing new matter into the disclosure. Claims 1, 4, 7 and 14 have been amended to change "design information" to "data required for the preliminary preparation of the inspection of the semiconductor device." This feature of the invention finds support in the specification on page 11, lines 2-14. In addition, claims 1, 4, 7 and 14 have been amended to delete the feature that refers to "the trial inspection is executed using the set temporary inspection conditions." Accordingly, the claim objections are overcome, and withdrawal of the objection to claims 1, 4, 7 and 14 is respectfully requested.

Claim Rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 112

The Office Action rejected claims 1, 2, 4-8, 10, 14 and 15 under 35 U.S.C. 112, first paragraph, as failing to comply with the written description requirement. The Office Action states that the drawings and the specification do not show support for the following steps: accessing a design database to download design information that identified using the received product name and the received process name, processing the downloaded design information to set temporary inspection conditions, and executing a trial inspection of the semiconductor device to detect defects, wherein the trial inspection is executed using the set of temporary inspection conditions." The Office Action further states that the claimed feature "an inaccurately detected defect" raises new matter. Without conceding the merits of the rejection, Applicants respectfully submit that the amended claims overcome this rejection.

As discussed above with reference to the claim objections, Claims 1, 4, 7 and 14 have been amended to change "design information" to "data required for the preliminary preparation of the inspection of the semiconductor device." Claims 1, 4, 7 and 14 have been further amended to delete the feature that refers to "the trial inspection is executed using the set temporary inspection conditions."

In addition, claims 2, 5 and 6 have been amended to change "an inaccurately detected defect" to "a false alarm." This feature of the invention finds support in the portion of the specification bridging page 13, line 12 - page 14, line 15.

In view of the foregoing, withdrawal of the rejection of claims 1, 2, 4-8, 10, 14 and 15 under 35 U.S.C. 112 is respectfully requested.

Claim Rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 102

Claims 1, 2, 4-8, 10, 14 and 15 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(a) as being anticipated by Applicants' admitted prior art. Without conceding the merits of the rejection, Applicants respectfully submit that the amended claims overcome this rejection.

Claim 1, as amended, recites in part a "method for inspecting semiconductor devices comprising: processing the down loaded data required for the preliminary preparation of the inspection of the semiconductor device, to set temporary inspection conditions,... wherein the processing is performed before the semiconductor device to be inspected arrives at a location for the trial inspection and the temporary conditions are set without referencing the semiconductor device to be inspected."

The feature of the invention which states that "the processing is performed before the semiconductor device to be inspected arrives at a location for the trial inspection" is disclosed in the specification on page 5, in the second paragraph of the "SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION", and on page 10 in the second sentence of the "DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS". The feature of the invention which states that "the temporary conditions are set without referencing the semiconductor device to be inspected" is disclosed in the specification on page 19, lines 16-19.

In contrast, Applicants' admitted prior art discloses extracting and setting new inspection conditions each time a new wafer having a different layout is to be inspected. The wafer is loaded into the inspection device inspection while the inspection conditions are extracted.

Neither Applicants' admitted prior art nor any of the other cited references disclose the elements of claim 1. Specifically, Applicants' admitted prior art does not disclose, "the processing is performed before the semiconductor device to be inspected arrives at a location for the trial inspection and the temporary conditions are set without referencing the semiconductor device to be inspected." For at least this reason, claim 1 is allowable over the cited art, as is claim 2 which depends from claim 1.

Independent claims 4, 7 and 14 have been amended to recite features that are similar to the features recited in amended claim 1. As discussed above with reference to claim 1, the cited art does not teach these features. Thus, claims 4, 7 and 14 are also allowable over the cited art for at least the same reasons. Claims 5, 6, 8, 10 and 15 are dependent on one of allowable claims 4, 7 and 14, and derive patentability therefrom.

Accordingly, withdrawal of the rejection of claims 1, 2, 4-8, 10, 14 and 15 under 35 U.S.C. 102(a) is respectfully requested.

CONCLUSION

In view of the foregoing, Applicants believe all claims now pending in this application are in condition for allowance. The issuance of a formal Notice of Allowance at an early date is respectfully requested.

Application No. 10/082,593
AKIRA HAMAMATSU *et al.*
Reply to Office Action of March 21, 2007

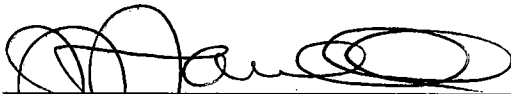
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If the Examiner believes a telephone conference would expedite prosecution of this application, please telephone the undersigned at 206-467-9600.

Respectfully submitted,

June 21, 2007

Date



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